

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing on the urgent matter of your most recent military actions in Syria. Following reports of Bashar al-Assad's chemical weapons attack on his own people in Syria, you authorized the use of more than 50 Tomahawk cruise missiles from the USS Ross and USS Porter, located in the Mediterranean Sea, on Shayrat Air Base in Syria.

We condemn the actions of the Syrian dictator, which are not only deplorable but constitute a direct break from the Chemical Weapons Convention, which Syria signed in 2013. The Convention is an arms control treaty, which clearly outlaws producing and using chemical weapons. However, we recognize that decisions on our national security cannot be based on instinct or emotional reactions—they have to come from strategic and thorough planning by our Nation's top security advisors and most importantly, with the input of Congress.

According to the Constitution, the powers of war are divided between the executive and legislative branches. Article I, Section 8, Clause 11, explicitly assigns the power to declare war to Congress. The president constitutionally must seek formal authorization for war.

Specifically, pursuant to the War Powers Resolution—which reaffirms and further elaborates the constitutional meaning of the war powers granted to Congress—the president has to submit a report to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and to the President pro tempore of the Senate within 48 hours of engaging in military action. The report has to set forth:

- (1) the circumstances necessitating the introduction of United States Armed Forces;
- (2) the constitutional and legislative authority under which such introduction took place;
- and
- (3) the estimated scope and duration of the hostilities or involvement.**

This important legislation establishes specific procedural steps that the president is required to take if he wants to engage in military action while also addressing the potential for the need of an emergency response to an attack. It clearly indicates that in every possible instance, the president is to consult with Congress before engaging in any military conflict.

Not only did you fail to seek congressional authorization for this military strike, but to the best of our understanding, Congress was neither formally consulted nor notified that you had approved the use of a retaliatory missile strike on Syria. This sets a dangerous precedent for your administration and is in direct contradiction to previous statements you've made denouncing intervention in Syria, avoiding further entanglements in the Middle East and ultimately putting America's interests first.

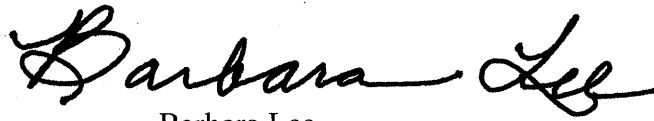
Based on these actions, the 48-hour stipulation under the War Powers Resolution has been triggered and you must report to Congress within this time period the information stipulated in the War Powers Resolution noted above.

Should you anticipate the need for further involvement in Syria, through the use and deployment of our Armed Forces, we ask that you prepare and submit to Congress a comprehensive request for the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) that clearly outlines the objective of military action, an estimated duration of engagement, and a plan for an exit strategy in Syria. We look forward to your timely response.

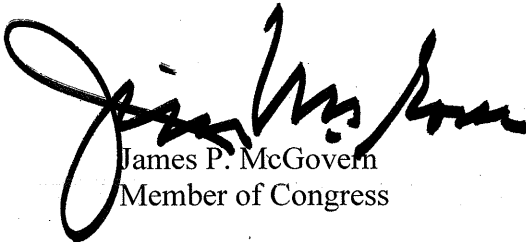
Sincerely,



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress